$2

APRIL 3, 2026 | VOLUME 17 | ISSUE 8

YOUR PURCHASE BENEFITS THE VENDORS.
PLEASE BUY ONLY FROM BADGED VENDORS.

In loving memory of Melvin Parson.
page 13

MEET YOUR VENDOR:
LARZELL WASHINGTON
PAGE 3

GROUNDCOVER 15

15 YEARS OF NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

poetry edition 2026

29 poems, by 21 unique poets

THIS PAPER WAS BOUGHT FROM venmo

@groundcovernews, include vendor name and vendor #

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

PROVIDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-DETERMINED INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY POVERTY,
PRODUCING A STREET NEWSPAPER THAT GIVES A PLATFORM TO UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES IN WASHTENAW COUNTY,
PROMOTING AN ACTION TO BUILD A JUST, CARING AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each copy of our regular editions of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for $2, keeping all income and tips from each sale. Vendors are the main contributors to the paper, and are compensated to write and report.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. Our paper is a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers.

International Network of Street Papers

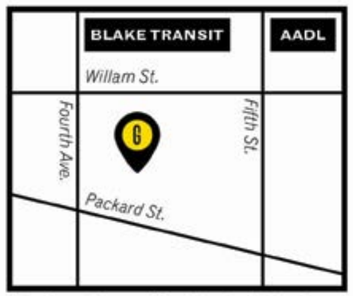
NOW HIRING: GROUNDCOVER NEWS VENDORS!

Why?

- *Make money on your first day*
- *Choose your own schedule*
- *Work for yourself*
- *Join a supportive community*
- *Get started this week for FREE*

Groundcover New Vendor Orientations are EVERY Tuesday and Thursday at 10am at the Groundcover Office.

Trainings take 90 minutes.
New vendors receive 10 free papers and a badge to start.



The Groundcover office is located in the basement of Bethlehem United Church of Christ (423 S 4th Ave, downtown Ann Arbor)

We are hosting an Ypsi New Vendor Orientation on Wednesday, April 22, 11 a.m. at the Ypsilanti District Library (Michigan Ave branch - Room 2 in the basement)!

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WAYS TO SUPPORT
1. **Buy the paper, read the paper.**
2. **Get the word out** — We rely on grassroots marketing. Talk to people about Groundcover and share us with your network.
3. **Volunteer** — You'll learn a lot about our vendors, the newspaper and your community. Interested in volunteering regularly? Fill out the form on our website.
4. **Advertise** your company, organization, event or resource — see rates below.
5. **Follow us on Facebook and Instagram** — promote our posts and share your favorite articles and vendor interactions.
6. **Donate items** — A seasonally appropriate list of items most needed at our office and on the street is available on our website. Drop off anytime we're open.

CONTACT US
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GROUNDCOVER NEWS ADVERTISING RATES for one month

Size	Black/White	Color	Dimensions (W x H in inches)
1/8	$110.00	$150.00	5 X 3 or 2.5 X 6.5
1/6	$145.00	$200.00	5 X 4
1/4	$200.00	$265.00	5 X 6.25
1/2	$375.00	$500.00	5 X 13 or 10.25 X 6.5
full page	$660.00	$900.00	10.25 X 13

PACKAGE PRICING
Three Months/Six Issues: **15%** off
Six Months/Twelve Issues: **25%** off
Full Year/Twenty six Issues: **35%** off
Only run for two weeks/one issue: **40%** off
Additional **20%** discount for money saving coupons

MEET YOUR VENDOR

Larzell Washington, vendor No. 128

In one sentence, who are you? I am a motivated person.

Where do you usually sell Groundcover? Everywhere.

When and why did you start selling Groundcover? Because I'm a people-person and I love to communicate.

What words do you live by? Expect the same respect and you will make it.

What is something about you that someone on the street wouldn't know? I can speak a little Mandarin and Japanese.

What motivates you to work hard selling? My love for people motivates me.

If you had to eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be? Chef's salad.

What's your superpower? LOVE.

What's the most interesting thing that happened to you when selling Groundcover? I have met the most interesting people who have walked the Earth.

What change would you like to see in Washtenaw County? To get rid of opiates and stop pushing in the county jail. The county jail shouldn't turn into a methadone clinic.

Spring has Sprung.

EMERI JADE BEY
Groundcover vendor No. 660

A nimals finally coming out of hibernation.
P retty flowers and trees in bloom.
R ain boots just in case.
I love Spring time, how about you?
L isten to the birds sing a sweet song of Spring every morning.

Gratitude

EMERI JADE BEY

Thank you God for another day,
Another day in the land of the living.
Thank you God for my health and strength,
And a mind to employ them aright.
Thank you God for the trials and tests.
The more I read your word, the more I know I am blessed.
Thank you God for loving me,
The more I step toward you Almighty, the more you run toward me.
Ase'

Please Help!

JASON MICHAEL CHURCH

Everyone please listen to we.
We all need to help the trees.
All we have to do is pick up the leaves.
If we do not, the trees will fall down indeed.
Too many leaves cover the ground.
Now from the bottom the sun is not found.
When it rains the leaves soak it all up.
The roots are not able to help their trees much.
Let us remember that trees give us air.
So get to the parks and show that you care.
Bring a trash bag, fill it with leaves.
Help mother nature who everyday bleeds.
For us all to have our everyday things.
It feels so good to help, you will probably sing.
"Thank you so much!" The trees will surely say,
If you go out and help them today.

Most Important

JASON MICHAEL CHURCH
Groundcover contributor

We finally figured out what is most important.
In life, simply to not ignore it.

Next would be breathing and posture.
Not acting if the thinking is not sure.

Also staying off drugs.
Spreading only peace, kindness, and love.

Dancing in the rain

KIMANI HAMILTON

When I dance in the rain I simply thank God
When I dance in the rain I'm simply at one with God
When I dance in the rain I'm simply cleansed by the Earth's natural water
When I dance in the rain I'm peaceful

Settle

KIMANI HAMILTON
Groundcover vendor No. 518

In the world we live in we settle
For basic happiness
We settle
For low paying jobs
We settle
For basic care
We settle
For today
Hoping for a good tomorrow.
We settle for basic love
Which we think we deserve
We settle for a basic medicine
Which treats, not cure
So why settle

Tigress

DIANA FEAD
Groundcover contributor

Mothers' love a clawing tigress
Wild instinct, ferocious
Keenly watches
Never lets go of her prize.

Mothers prowl, pace and wait
Snarl to every threat
Powerful jaw
Defiant against all.

Tigress roams without a sound
Senses alert to danger
Hovers near the pride
No cub has strayed.

Care-Based Safety has come to an end, but the work continues

MIKE JONES
Groundcover vendor No. 113

Left to right: **CBS staff Amal, Sheri , Essence, Nia and Tyler.**

Care-Based Safety was an unarmed nonpolice response community that was established in September 2023. Care-Based Safety was dedicated to acting with principle and intention. CBS is taking careful steps in sunsetting this community response program that brought loving, unarmed support to people directly impacted by structural violence — without police. In planning, response and practice, CBS centered the needs of people who are Black, Indigenous, undocumented, unhoused, LGBTQIA+, using drugs and/or experiencing mental health struggles.

From the start, CBS was focused not just on response, but also on community building. CBS was co-created through listening sessions and surveys. From their design team they heard over and over that: 50% of the work should be community building; building trust and a safety net in our community is the only way for success; and those who respond to whatever situations that might occur in our community should be from the community. To that end CBS created and launched a series of "place-based pilot programs."

"The pilot program is a place-based pilot, meaning we will be in the downtown area and if any crisis or conflict is brought to our attention, we will respond," said Community Lead Sheri Wander.

From June to September 2024, CBS hosted games, activities and connection two nights per week at the Growing Hope location in downtown Ypsilanti. During that time, they planned and delivered wellness and community-building activities that averaged around 28 participants per event, and distributed resources and supplies.

CBS also provided rapid response crisis management including court and jail support, shelter support, conflict de-escalation, mental health crisis intervention and also launched a "nonemergency support phone number so people could connect with court support service, information about food pantries, transportation needs and more," according to Wander.

Organizing for CBS grew directly out of organizing in protest of the murder of Aura Rosser at the hands of the Ann Arbor Police Department. Realizing that police oversight was not enough and there needed to be an alternative to the police, the Coalition for Re-envisioning our Safety (CROS) was formed. CROS eventually split into two groups: CROS itself remained largely an advocacy group and the CBS Design Team was born. While CROS worked to push the City of Ann Arbor to fund a nonpolice response to conflict and crisis, the CBS design team designed such a program, Care-Based Safety.

When (pushed by CROS advocacy) Ann Arbor launched a request for proposals (RFP) to grant an organization $3.5 million to do that work for the City of Ann Arbor, CBS applied. CBS was the only group that applied.

In spite of that, CBS did not receive the grant. In fact, after the application deadline, the City revoked the RFP, stating that they had changes they needed to make, but that CBS could reapply when the new RFP was issued.

When the new RFP was eventually issued, it was inconsistent with the values of CBS. It required info from response calls to be FOIAable and for responders to report crimes (including drug use and camping). It also required immediate 24-7 response which was not realistic, and didn't fund the community building pieces that CBS believes are so critical.

So CBS had community meetings and asked if the group should apply for this new RFP and, to a person, the answer was no.

So the focus shifted to Ypsilanti and was funded with smaller grants from private foundations and individual donations.

Care-Based Safety operated one program with two core components: Community Building, which strengthened communities to prevent harm, and Care-Based Response, which provided support before, during and after conflict, crisis or other concerns.

Using a public health approach, the program was led by highly trained, fairly-compensated peer workers, with additional support from dedicated volunteers. Shaped by CROS research and 18 community listening sessions in 2023, it was designed to be independent from government, separate from 911 and law enforcement, sustainably funded, and peer-led.

In addition to responding to individual conflicts, CBS addressed structural violence — such as institutional neglect and discrimination — that fuels harm in our communities. Every decision is rooted in safety, self-determination, dignity and community consent.

Back in 2023, I talked to Washtenaw County native Liz Kennedy, the former director, who led operations and culture work at CBS.

I asked her, "Why does this community need CBS?"

"The community we serve asked for (CBS). We are a very diverse group of community leaders, who work, live and play in Ypsilanti, and Ann Arbor, and in the wider Washtenaw County community. We are the representatives of people who are most impacted by police and state violence like people of color, trans and queer, and those suffering from mental health issues, and together we are developing a care-based system for all. Care-Based Safety is created by us and for us."

Message sent to community partners from CBS

After deep and mindful discernment, we have decided that Care-Based Safety will sunset at the end of March 2026.

It is ironic, sunsetting the organization on the heels of the 30-hour violent police siege against a local community member resulting from calls concerned about his mental health, and the police killing of an unarmed individual following a police chase through residential neighborhoods in a separate incident. These incidents certainly underscore in very real and painful ways the need for this work and made this decision even more painful and difficult. Yet we believe it is the right decision.

Over the last three to four years, since community members came together to dream CBS into being, the political and funding landscape has changed greatly. We realize that the CBS as designed by the community simply cannot currently exist without municipal funding and support.

We also realize that organizations, like all living things, have life cycles. While Care Based Safety as an organization is sunsetting, by doing so intentionally — in a planned, mindful and values-aligned way — we help to maintain the space for the work of safety based in care to continue and to grow in ways we have only begun and sometimes haven't even started to imagine!

That realization is the sweet to go with the bitter, and gives us hope.

We have learned so much over the past few years and are still learning. We look forward to sharing those lessons. Over the next month please look for one final newsletter, and other avenues to share those "lessons learning." With NO pressure or obligation, we would love to hear your thoughts and ideas and lessons from this journey.

As individuals we came to CBS already involved in this work of safety-based care in a variety of ways and look forward to continuing to be in community with you continuing the work even though it won't be under the banner of CBS.

Care-Based Safety sends a special thanks to friends and partners: Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice, Coalition for Re-envisioning our Safety, Peace House Ypsi, Detroit Justice Center, American Friends Service Committee, Vital Strategies, United Way Southeast Michigan, Borealis Philanthropy, Community Economic Development Washtenaw County, Community Foundation Washtenaw County, Michigan Justice Fund and Daytime Warming Center.

Maximizing affordable housing availability in Washtenaw County

ZOE BEHNKE
Zion Lutheran Church Adult Education Committee

Access to affordable housing extends beyond the unemployed or unhoused population, encompassing a broad segment of the workforce. Individuals in of affordable housing often include retail employees, entry-level workers, those in the hospitality industry, as well as essential personnel such as teachers, police officers and firefighters. Employees of small businesses and higher education institutions also frequently fall within this category.

The issue has wide-reaching implications for residents across the county. When individuals are able to live in the same communities where they work, more of their income is spent locally, supporting local businesses and strengthening the regional economy. Advocates note that such housing patterns can also help reduce traffic congestion, encourage activity in downtown districts, and foster greater long-term investment in local neighborhoods.

Zion Lutheran Church will be hosting a forum on affordability in Washtenaw County on Saturday, April 18, with 8:30 a.m. refreshments and a 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. program. Our panelists include:

Panel 1: Amanda Carlisle, Washtenaw Housing Alliance Executive Director; Washtenaw County Commissioner, Andy LaBarre; Rev. Elizabeth Friedman, Lord of Light Lutheran Campus Ministries; and Christopher Taylor, City of Ann Arbor Mayor.

Panel 2: Aaron Cooper, Avalon Housing Executive Director; Jim Haeussler, Norfolk Homes representative; Jennifer Hall, Ann Arbor Housing Commission Executive Director; and Alision Oumedian, Habitat for Humanity Director of Individual Giving and Fundraising.

Some of the issues to be covered include: What is affordable housing and who qualifies for it? What are the obstacles causing this crisis? How are local non-profit organizations/ local governments addressing this issue? How can individuals or organizations get involved to address the issue of affordable housing in their local community and Washtenaw County?

We will be having a Q&A after each panel presentation to encourage community engagement. This event is free and open to the public.

Zion Lutheran Church is located at 1501. W. Liberty, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

community **EVENTS**

HASH BASH
Saturday, April 4, 12 p.m. University of Michigan Diag, Ann Arbor. *The arrest and imprisonment of John Sinclair (for possession of two joints) set Ann Arbor on the trajectory as Michigan's most pioneering cannabis community. Sinclair's arrest and 10-year sentence led to protests and rallies, ultimately morphing into the iconic Hash Bash, an annual protest-fueled gathering of live music and speeches since 1972.*

EXPLORING THE POETRY OF MURIEL RUKEYSER: GAINING COURAGE THROUGH POETRY
Thursday, April 9, 2026, 6:30-8 p.m. via Zoom. *Muriel Rukeyser believed poetry to be a unique method of knowing oneself and responding meaningfully to one's world, and she used poetry to respond to numerous social, political and personal events. In this workshop, we'll explore a specific use of poetry: What can poetry do for courage? Join YpsiWrites and retired EMU Professor of English and Women's and Gender Studies Elisabeth Däumer, along with poet and clinical social worker David Boeving, in an exploration of courage and the poetry of Muriel Rukeyser.* ypsilibrary.events.mylibrary.digital/event?id=278446

GROUNDCOVER WRITING WORKSHOP: DOCUMENT-BASED REPORTING
Friday, April 10, 10 a.m., Groundcover News office. *A workshop to familiarize writers with using budgets, meeting minutes and FOIAs in their reporting. Attend alongside Groundcover vendors and writers.*

REVOLUTIONARY FOOD GATHERING
Friday, April 10, 5-7 p.m. Ann Arbor Friends Meeting House, 1420 Hill St., Ann Arbor. *Potluck and discussion to discover who we are in relationship to our food, the earth and each other. Hosted by Groundcover News and Purslane Commons.*

FOOL MOON
Friday, April 10, 7:30 p.m - midnight, downtown Ann Arbor. *This annual magical outdoor nighttime event features a vast array of quirky and beautiful community-made illuminated sculptures, a huge street party, live music and more. All invited to make homemade light-up costumes and drum on pots and pans in celebration! 2026 theme is "Fools of a Feather."*

WCC CONCERT BAND: SMALL ENSEMBLES
Sunday, April 12, 2 p.m. Washtenaw Community College Morris Lawrence Building Towsley Auditorium, 4800 Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor. *Join for a program of small ensembles — from duets and trios to 20-piece bands — playing a variety of musical genres. Light refreshments served.*

FESTIFOOLS
Sunday, April 12, 4-5 p.m. Main Street, downtown Ann Arbor. *Build and bring a giant puppet, make a costume or be a spectator! No matter your style, you'll have fun becoming part of FestiFools, a larger-than-life, monumental moving art display. The parade begins at 4 p.m. sharp.*

"WHO'S THERE?!" ARB DANCE PERFORMANCE
Saturday, April 18, 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Nichols Arboretum, 1610 Washington Heights, Ann Arbor. *The Department of Dance at the U-M School of Music, Theatre & Dance and Ladina Schaller present "Who's There?!" This site-specific senior dance project consists of a walk through the Arb, along which the audience encounters a variety of characters, sights, sounds and scenes. The concert is around one hour long. Audience members are required to walk along Arboretum paths for the duration of the performance and are encouraged to dress for the weather and wear good shoes. This event is family-friendly and appropriate for all ages. Attendance is free, but RSVP is encouraged at this link:* tinyurl.com/yhr62hj8

Submit an event to be featured in the next edition:
submissions@groundcovernews.com

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Arabic Folktales with Author Hadil Ghoneim

Thursday | Mar 26 | 2-3pm
YDL-Whittaker

Award-winning local author Hadil Ghoneim reads from her new book, *Arabic Folktales for Children*, to celebrate National Arab American Heritage Month.

FEATURED EVENT

FRIENDS OF YDL BOOK SALE

Thurs. - Sun. | Apr. 30-May 3 | See times in description
YDL-Whittaker

$1 for hardcovers, 25¢ for kids books, 50¢ for mass market paperbacks, and $1 for oversize paperbacks. On Sunday, there will be bags of books available for $5, and some books will be sold for a reduced price.

Apr. 30: 6-8pm (Friends of YDL members-only sale)
May 1: 11am-5pm
May 2: 11am-3pm
May 3: 1-3pm

Where the Roses Remember Me

I did not know I was becoming
while I was becoming—

Somewhere beneath the quiet of my early years,
I was already a rose bush in the making,
gathering color in the dark,
learning the language of roots
before I learned the language of people.

They entered my life like weather crossing a garden.
Some were morning visitors—
soft light, brief warmth,
a touch that opened one petal
and then moved on.
Others came as storms,
uninvited but essential,
their winds tearing away what I clung to
so something truer could take its place.

And then there were the ones who stayed—
steady sun, patient rain,
a presence that asked nothing
but offered everything.
They tended me without knowing it,
believing in my bloom
long before I dared to unfurl.

Every soul, passing or permanent,
left a trace upon my branches.
Some carved resilience by leaving,
their absence a pruning
that shaped my strength.
Some taught the necessity of thorns—
boundaries grown from lessons
I once mistook for pain.
And some watered the quiet parts of me,
coaxing color from places
I thought would remain closed.

Now, when I look at myself,
I see a rose bush in full knowing—
not untouched by storms,
but transformed by them.
My blooms carry the memory of every season,
my thorns the wisdom of every wound,
my branches the stories of those
who crossed my garden.

We do not become ourselves alone.
We become through weather, through touch,
through the grace of those who arrive
and the necessary departure of those who do not stay.

And when I finally stand still—
really still—
I see it:
a life shaped into color,
a spirit rising again and again
toward its own light.

I see that I have become the
roses.

And I am beautiful.

MONIQUE CALDWELL
Groundcover contributor

Deliverance from YAWEH

MARQUETTA Q CLEMENTS
Groundcover contributor

How is this fair?
Homeless, A Criminal
A victim to Despair
Am I guilty for the things I do to maintain?
Being poor is to blame
No humility nor shame
I'd kill for a chance that my family can see
The Dream MLK once had, called change
I fear I won't see that Day
I fight so these kids, & kids'
kids can change that fate
All this hate that circulates
I avoid the tides and waves
Call me Moses of my people
LORD BREAK EVERY CHAIN TODAY
From the POET in the Quran
To King James
Let my tongue be a vessel
To keys that'll free all the Enslaved
Let these metaphors send shots, B-bang
Let it pierce the ears and RESONATE
Truth bombs have IEDs
Lies are like pressured weight
Set it off like Jada Pinkett
Honesty shall detonate
Let it hit like metal shards
Ripping thru the veins
God is God, God is Great
Remember His Grace thru pain
He ain't do it to you, he did it for you
Mercy that his plan leads to fate
His timing is never late
I am his anointed detained
This Earth shall shake.

Please Keep My Name Out of Your Mouth

LA SHAWN COURTWRIGHT
Groundcover writer

Please keep my name out of your mouth!!
Especially when you have no idea,
not a clue of what you are
even talkin about.

Please keep my name out of your mouth!!
Most of what you are saying are twisted
passed along lies.
As a matter of fact
You don't even spell my name correctly!!
"That's right"

Soo...

Please keep my name out of your mouth!!
If you checked my resume...
Most likely, you will be amazed.

Soo...

Please keep my name out of your mouth!!
Which is full of decay, defamatory things!!
It's not cool to use my name that way.
If you took more time to put yourself in check,
then maybe you wouldn't be so busy
trying to make my life a wreck.
So check yourself once again, and,

Please keep my name out of your mouth!!

Refinement

DAVID CRANE
Groundcover contributor

You don't sharpen a blade without taking something from it.
Each pass removes material.
Each correction leaves less behind.

People talk about growth like it is addition.
It is not.
It is subtraction.

What remains must justify what was lost.

Cold-Blooded

DAVID CRANE

That's what they call it —

The world confuses kindness for harmlessness.
But love has never been harmless.
To guard what is sacred requires teeth and restraint.
Requires the quiet knowledge of what you're capable of.
Either stay dangerous enough to protect who you love-
Or admit you don't deserve the trust.
Mercy is a luxury for those with nothing to defend.

My Garip (strange) Hunger

DIDEM KOCHAN
Groundcover contributor

Ever since I was a child, I found eating to be a chore that interrupted my daydreaming. Yet whenever my parents and I approached the ferry docks to cross the Bosphorus, a sudden, miraculous hunger would overcome me.

"I'm hungry," I would insist, wide-eyed and urgent.

My parents, ever hopeful my appetite would finally arrive, would buy me a simit (Turkish bagel, crusty, golden, thick with toasted sesame seeds). But as soon as we stepped onto the ferry and the engines began to thrum against the waters of the Bosphorus, my hunger would change shape. I didn't want to eat the simit. I wanted to give it away.

I stood at the railing, salt air whipping my hair, tearing the bread into small pieces. A white cloud of seagulls followed the boat like a screaming escort, as if they knew this ferry ritual was about to begin. I tossed the pieces into the wind and watched the birds dive and catch them mid-air without ever missing a beat. By the time we reached the other side, the simit was gone, the seagulls were fed, and I was full, not of bread, but of the simple joy of that ritual.

I did not know it then, but years before I was born, someone in Istanbul had already been paying attention to moments like this. His name was Orhan Veli Kanık.

In the 1940s, poetry in Turkey often favored elaborate metaphors and elevated language; art was meant for a refined elite. But Orhan Veli, along with his friends (Melih Cevdet Anday and Oktay Rifat), decided to strip the finery off the verse. Blending their socialist perspective with their poetry, they began what became known as the "Garip movement" (garip means strange, but it also refers to an outsider, or someone forgotten). Their manifesto was simple but radical: poetry should belong to the common person.

The Garip movement focused on everyday subjects with a sense of humor, irony and satire. They abandoned traditional rhyme in favor of the natural rhythm of a conversation at a tea house. Orhan Veli wrote about life in his favorite city, Istanbul, the women he liked, men with empty pockets and fine weather. He famously wrote about the nagging discomfort of a corn on a man's foot, a subject that shocked the literary establishment of the time. He let the street enter the poem.

I would like to believe that Orhan Veli would not have judged me for my little lie to get that simit for the seagulls. He understood that sometimes we bend the truth of our needs to satisfy the truth of our hearts. He once introduced himself simply as "Bir garip Orhan Veli" (just a strange or simple-hearted Orhan Veli). There is something deeply human in that simplicity. His poems never demand greatness, they ask only for attention. In "İstanbul'u Dinliyorum" (I Am Listening to Istanbul) he begins and repeats:

"I am listening to Istanbul, with my eyes closed..."

This famous poem unfolds through sound and sensation: a breeze moving leaves, distant bells, water brushing against a pier. Nothing monumental happens. The city breathes, and he listens. Orhan Veli preserved the Istanbul that history books often ignore. He looked for the laundry hanging from balconies, saw the fishermen on the shore, and caught the late afternoon light striking the water just so. As the poem reaches its end, it turns from the sounds of the street to the pulse of a person:

"I am listening to Istanbul, with my eyes closed;
A bird flutters at your hem;
I know if your forehead is warm or not;
I know if your lips are wet or not;
A white moon rises behind the pine trees,
I understand it all from the beating of your heart;
I am listening to Istanbul."

In "Aşk Resmi Geçidi"(Love's Parade), he lists his past loves without a trace of drama or tragedy. For example, he recalls his second love (maybe a childhood crush), Münevver Abla, an older girl whose garden he used to leave secret, earnest letters in, hoping she would notice him:

"She'd burst into laughter as she read the letters I'd keep writing and throwing into her garden.
As for me, I still feel the shame even today
Whenever I remember those letters."

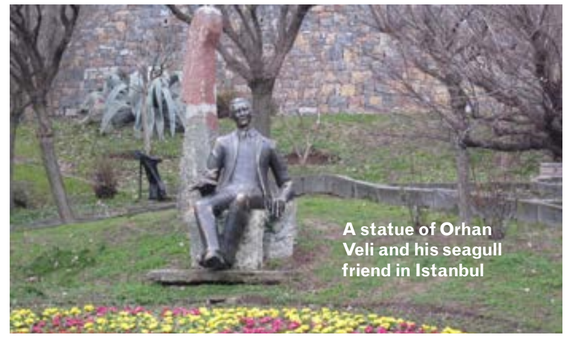
In his world, people pass through a heart as casually as they might walk through a neighborhood. There is humor here, and a gentle self-mockery. It doesn't feel like a declaration so much as a shrug, a recognition that life happens, we feel its sting, and we move on. Perhaps that is why his poetry has always soothed me.

Now, I find myself living in Ann Arbor. The geography is different, of course. Instead of the vast, salty expanse of the Bosphorus dividing two continents, I have the quiet, winding Huron River. When I first moved here, I looked for my childhood Istanbul in the cracks of the sidewalk. I missed the ferry rides and the smell of roasted chestnuts on every corner. But as I settled into my new home, I started to realize that Orhan Veli's Garip philosophy travels remarkably well. And slowly, Ann Arbor revealed its own "Garip" moments. They appear in the way people gather at the Farmers' Market on a Saturday morning, in the person standing on the corner of a street, selling this very paper, or in the way the town holds its breath during the first snowfall. I would like to thank Orhan Veli for teaching me how to "listen to" a city, and I imagine a few lines in his spirit for our Groundcover vendors:

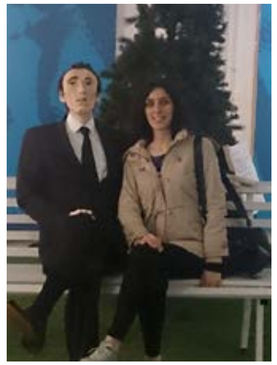
"A stack of papers under one arm,
A smile for the wind.
He stands where the street meets the morning light,
Waiting for a neighbor to notice."

Just like Orhan Veli, Istanbul will always remain my favorite city. It is the place where my heart first learned to listen with its eyes closed. But I have crossed another kind of water since those ferry rides. I have learned that home is not only where the Bosphorus glitters. It is wherever I notice those simple Garip moments.

I no longer pretend to be hungry before boarding ferries. Everyone knew, even then, that my hunger was strategic. But I still believe in small offerings, "the Garip acts." A piece of bread tossed into the wind. A line of verse that does not try to be important. A quiet moment saved from vanishing, like a seagull snatching a crumb of simit in mid-air.



A statue of Orhan Veli and his seagull friend in Istanbul



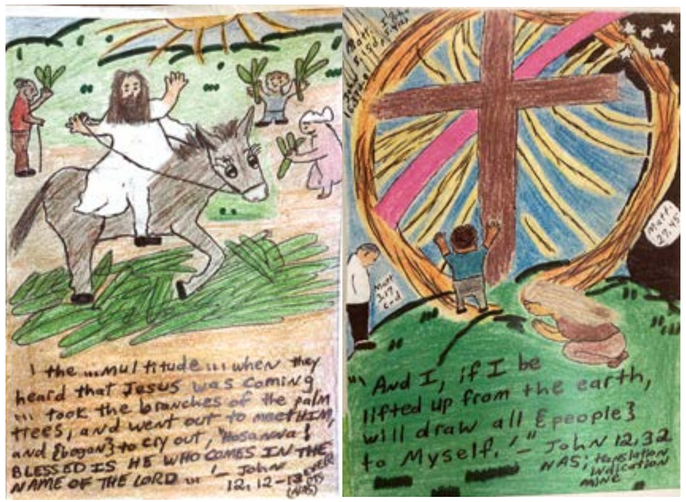
Two simple souls sharing a bench: one in shape, one in memory.

Bethlehem United Church of Christ
whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here
423 S. Fourth Avenue, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 734-665-6149
Bethlehem-ucc.org facebook.com/bethlehemuccA2
Bethlehem Church is home of the Groundcover office
UNITED TO END POVERTY & JUST
APRIL 2026 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM
MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 7:00 PM
ECUMENICAL SERVICE AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 7:00 PM
ECUMENICAL SERVICE AT KING OF KINGS ELCA
EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 10:00 AM AT BETHLEHEM UCC
Please visit the church website at:
www.bethlehem-ucc.org for the most up-to-date calendar and event information.
Sunday Worship Time
10:00 am In-person and via Live Stream

All About Easter

DENISE SHEARER
Groundcover vendor No. 485

Easter is a great holiday for children and adults
Easter can be celebrated all of April
Easter is a pretty holiday
Easter is a great time for people to learn to love ourselves and forgive others
Easter is a great time to celebrate God and Jesus, too, of course
Easter is a great time, too, to have an excuse to enjoy some candy and goodies
Easter is a great time to dress up and look the best way that we can.
Easter is all about the fun, the candy, and the Easter bunny
Because God and Jesus made all of that for us to enjoy.
Sometimes it rains on Easter, but enjoying Easter outweighs the rain.
It reminds me of the movie and song, "Singing in the Rain"
April showers bring May flowers
I hope everybody's spring springs up something good in their lives, including myself.


the multitude... when they heard that JESUS was coming took the branches of the palm trees, and went out to meet HIM, and [began] to cry out, "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD" — John 12, 12-13
"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [people] to Myself." — John 12.32 NAS; translation inflection mine
"HE has risen... Come, see... and go tell..."
"JESUS will come in just the same way..."

By Amanda Gale, Groundcover vendor no. 573

Water EleMental: Fire, Earth and Air

EARTH DAY PLANNING COMMITTEE

As it's been said, "So above, as below." We mimic the Earth — Gaia — in every way. Our bodies' circulatory systems are like the creeks and rivers, carrying in nourishment, carrying away toxins. Our bodies are bundles of energy, with many forms of 'fire.' We manifest as bodies in the physical, as all beings, and all things. And full circle, we release emotionally, releasing the energies we collect, as does Gaia. And 'she' does this in many ways — some of which are destructive: tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, to name a few. These are all ways to bring balance, as our bodies do with fever, exhaustion, chills and bursts of energy.

There is a strong connection between the elements. Water evaporates from the action of the great fire in the sky, our star, the Sun. That same water falls to the ground, on our Earth and that physical element known as dirt. It dissolves into component elements, atoms and such. This makes way for release of these components — for change. Change is inevitable for energetic renewal. We can sense the energy of nature — in our healthy forests, a beautiful pristine beach, or a cliff overlooking a great chasm. We become one with nature when these same elements or aspects of our being — mental, physical, spiritual and emotional — balance.

Some of these changes are natural, some are induced, through the actions of many. So are there too many of us, or are we simply conducting ourselves in a manner unfit for our level of consumption? Or is it in the way in which we go about serving one another? Or do we lean more toward taking from one another, leaving each other and our waste behind — as previous civilizations have?!

Let's not get too deep into that history, the ancient history that seems to have been buried deep in the layers of earth here with Gaia, as we plow on through while turning over the dirt to find remnants here and there. And the legends of these past civilizations become myths as the records of that history become obscured and corrupted, destroyed and stolen. Shall we look at this closer as we plow on? With practice, we can now work toward balancing the equations to reduce and minimize the negative effects of our ways of business as usual!

So, on to practical applications of sustainability; permaculture, intentional community, cooperatives, collaborations, spiritual growth and development, study and practice ... Many are the ways in which we can observe rather than reinvent the wheels of progress toward sustainability. Sustainability of our ways and means of dealing with each other in a wholesome fashion, balancing the aspects of our BEING. And let's remember how that 'being' relates to the being known as Gaia, with 'her' connection to the ether, the ethers, the source of spirit — from our limited perspective.

These aspects and these elements can be attributed to the directions. Although everything exists in all directions, each has its own orientation, once again — according to our perspective upon this little planet. Much of our water is locked-up in the ice to our north here on our North American continent; the fire energy originates from the Sun arising from the east every day; a great concentration of earth lies to the south from our Great Lakes perspective; and the air normally blows in from the west. And I would like to leave off quoting from James Taylor's song, Fire and Rain: "Well there's hours of time on the telephone line / To talk about things to come / Sweet dreams and flying machines in pieces on the ground."

Let us not lose this great opportunity of flying machines falling to pieces on the ground as we rush through the economics of scarcity. Let's live in the gift of life within the context of "Sacred Economics," as spelled out so eloquently by Charles Eisenstein ... and so many others. These exchanges we make are meant to be a construct of our spiritual aspect. How often do our ways and means of manipulation and the forces of war, religion and corporate structures stand in the way of or destroy our spiritual ventures?

Attend some or all of Earth Day Week, a variety of events April 19-25 at the Ann Arbor Commons. More in the next Groundcover.

DIRECTED BY KAMERON DONALD
Premiere of the feature documentary
THE ROAD HOME
ADDRESSING HOUSING INSECURITIES AND HOMELESSNESS IN WASHTENAW COUNTY
APRIL 23, 2026 6PM
MAY 7, 2026 6PM
Michigan Theater
Ann Arbor, MI

The Road Home is a documentary exploring mental health, housing insecurity, and homelessness in Washtenaw County, highlighting community efforts and challenges.

Watch trailer: *youtu.be/oRCf8GeKmKI?si=dWKkkZcq-6sIEDK9*

Local organizations face fragmented responses, funding cuts and limiting support. The film's goal is to unite stakeholders, raise awareness, and inspire collective action to ensure compassionate, sustainable solutions.

Reserve your free seat at the Michigan Theater with the QR code
Additional screenings will take place throughout Washtenaw County.
PRODUCED BY ANN ARBOR HOUSING COMMISSION & BREYKO |
DIRECTED BY KAMERON DONALD | CREATIVE DIRECTOR BETHANY COX |
PRODUCER ZENAB LABARAN | GAFFER LORENZO TRIPP | EDITED BY KAMERON DONALD
| A BREYKO FILM

Be nice

PEDRO CAMPOS
Groundcover vendor No. 652

Never trust someone
who tries to look nice.

You're either nice
or you're not
and not nice
is no good.

No one tries to be nice
when they already are.
If you're nice,
you're just nice
no questions asked.

So why bother
looking nice?

It's not honest
to wear it like a mask,
to hide your evil eyes.

It may look nice
to be nice
and it is indeed nice
to be nice
but only looking nice
isn't good at all.

Not for you,
not fair for anyone.

Never rely on dice.
In this life
You don't get
to roll it twice.

Humble
you'll be.

Anyone can be nice.
It's a choice.
Not an easy one.

Do the work.
Pay the price.
Make the sacrifice.
You're human, not a mouse

Not the entire pie
take a slice.

Real nice
is to be nice.

People have been
always nice to me.
That's how I became
cooler than ice.

feels nice to be me
maybe it's my spice.

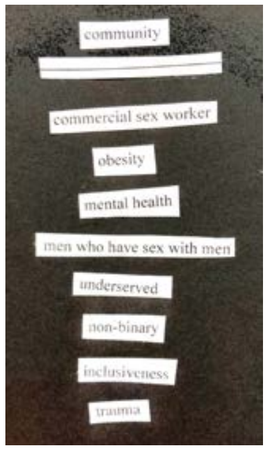
So follow my
sincere advice:

Never mind the looks,
just be nice.

Forbidden words poetry

On March 21, Groundcover News and PoetTree Town explored the list of words banned by the current United States administration and challenged the idea of censorship by creating art and poetry with these "forbidden words."

AUGUSTINE JAY
Groundcover vendor No. 678



PEDRO CAMPOS
Groundcover vendor No. 652

Whoa Nellie!

AUGUSTINE JAY

every time i think i know the when and why of where to go
i'm jostled jerking to and fro down upwards

things get blurry 'till

all sights to see are lost on me this forest isn't made of trees
but self indulgent sloppy sleaze fake comfort

puke a scripted pill

i'm killing all the slaver screens but cold turkey
without the ween dries out the jerky
slow smoke's clean and tasty
-
suffering a thrill

when ends don't justify the means or say, vice versa,
*c'est la vie"'s a rotten lie or "lie and rot" more like it...

this is not a drill

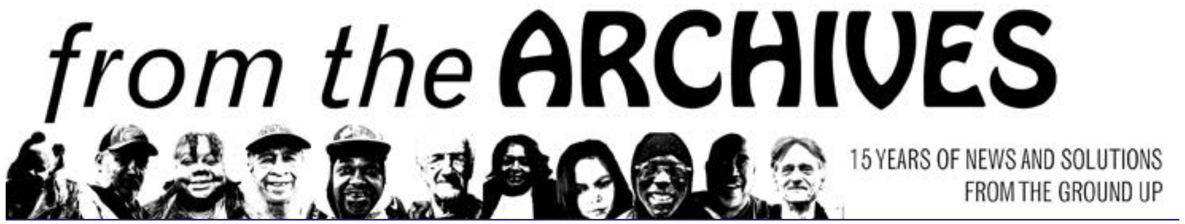
— hey does anyone else feel like a shrew screaming at a freight train right now ...or is it just me? is anyone there?
hello? *hello*???

...*crickets*...

Devil's Advocate

MARQUETTA "Q" CLEMENTS
Groundcover contributor

Prejudice My skin
They hate
Isolate
Detonate
Want change
But fear change
Embrace fate
Don't turn away
Early age
We dig graves
We're criminals
We're insane
The psych ward says I'm deranged
They caused my pain
Then locked me in chains
I can't get away
Black face
Losing race
I go to the music to escape
Wild and proud
Systematically I'm tamed
I'm dangerous
I'm ashamed
Wake up before its too late



Emotions

LA SHAWN COURTWRIGHT
Groundcover writer

Didn't know how to deal with all of the emotions
I often felt at one time
Most of them did not belong to me
They were the ones I was dealt
Those seem to be dominating any and every part of my own
Feelings that remained or not usually felt
No one to tell about what I was feeling
I didn't know how to be vulnerable
Cause every time I opened up about these things
Most of the times the person I'd tell
Made me feel more ashamed, of what I had revealed to them,
Cause basically it wasn't what I told them
It was me as a whole...
they were not ready or willing to accept
When they had hurt me
My other emotions conjured an escape emotion
In the form of a miracle drug
It seemed at the time
It was a temporary fix,
that made my mind fly to the sky,
as high or above the mountains peaks
At least that is what, how I was feeling,
for that moment, I thought, I think
My feet were not on the ground
The drugs' effects had lifted me up out of harm's way
For a lil while I had managed my own escape
Then came the emotions of the comedown
Oh, what a let down!
Again, that, those emotions were
right back there again
They're Not a Game

Originally published September 1, 2022.

Trying to be heard as a brother of those unheard

PHILIP SPINK
Groundcover vendor No. 630

I am discovering how difficult it is
To be listened to by the mainstream,
When trying to stay a brother of the unheard,
By speaking first for the love of those
Out ragged in the sun and winds and on dusty corners,
And so of the too discounted root.

It is natural to want to be of the mainstream,
Yet in the silence of lower tributaries of status
There are often people of higher waters
Of true kindness, modesty and wisdom.

Originally published December 29, 2023.

Costumes

JOE WOODS
Groundcover vendor No. 103

It's funny how people just look at a person's costumes
Prejudging before getting to know a person

Costumes

Categorizing just because of a person's garment
He's a nerd because he wears High Waters, he's a thug because he wears baggy jeans

Costumes

It's weird how a person's costume can determine how a person may act towards you
If you're in a shirt and tie and speak to somebody they will speak
If you're wearing holey, bummy clothes and speak to somebody they ignore you

Costumes

As a Groundcover vendor, I wore many costumes and got many different reactions from people
Let's take time to open our minds and get to know people and not just look at their costumes

Originally published in the Groundcover News 2017 Vendor Reality Retrospective Anthology.

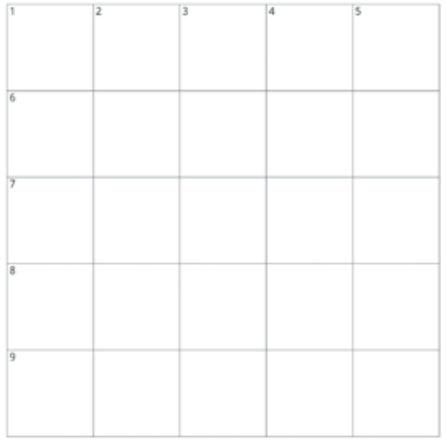
Lost dog

CHRISTOPHER ELLIS
Groundcover vendor No. 483

The picture on
the tree
a sentiment
human
akin
Some are adrift
are all
Is the whole wide world
In this
Population densed and filled
and no place unclaimed
Is lostness
real
Where is that dog
but we are all
here.

Originally published in June 2019.

Poetry CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Poetry
6 Beatnik's "Got it"
7 Tell
8 Shy
9 Coeur d'____

DOWN
1 Beautiful view
2 Digital Letter
3 "Ground" and "Found" or "Cover" and "Lover"
4 Protest
5 Lyric poem

CHANGES
Tupac Shakur
1971 - 1996
its time for us as a people to start making some Changes
Let's change the way we eat Lets change the way we Live. let's
Change the way treat each other. The old way isn't working
So it's on us to do what we gotta do TO SURVIVE

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS *March 20, 2026 edition*

9	5	6	2	3	7	1	4	8
4	7	1	6	9	8	3	5	2
3	2	8	4	1	5	9	6	7
2	9	7	5	4	1	8	3	6
5	6	4	3	8	2	7	9	1
8	1	3	7	6	9	4	2	5
7	3	5	1	2	4	6	8	9
1	4	9	8	5	6	2	7	3
6	8	2	9	7	3	5	1	4

T	O	S	H	■	S	H	E	S	■	■	C	A	D	S
I	D	E	A	■	H	E	R	E	■	L	A	T	H	I
N	E	E	M	■	E	A	S	T	■	A	R	M	O	R
■	■	■	I	N	A	R	T	I	C	U	L	A	T	E
M	A	H	L	E	R	■	■	■	A	D	O	N	I	S
E	R	A	T	O	S	T	H	E	N	E	S	■	■	■
D	E	V	O	N	■	W	O	U	N	D	■	C	P	A
A	N	O	N	■	D	I	M	L	Y	■	H	O	O	P
L	A	C	■	A	E	R	I	E	■	S	E	N	S	E
■	■	■	R	O	L	L	E	R	S	K	A	T	E	R
R	O	B	E	R	T	■	■	■	L	I	V	E	R	Y
I	R	R	I	T	A	B	I	L	I	T	Y	■	■	■
L	I	A	N	A	■	L	O	O	P	■	S	A	R	I
L	E	V	E	L	■	O	T	T	O	■	E	X	A	M
S	L	E	D	■	■	G	A	I	N	■	T	E	M	P

Instead Of ChatGPT, I'd Ask

CIATTA TUCKER
Groundcover contributor

a swaying oak tree in spring
the slow steady stream of a river
the heart shaped crystal in my back pocket
the unopened books on my nightstand
a broken lava lamp at the thrift store
my microwave at 3am
the troll underneath the bridge
a Toyota RAV from the year 2001
Yahoo.com
the rotten carcass of an apple
or a pear or
a tattered baby blanket
maybe a toddler asleep on his mother's chest
the biker gang on Washtenaw
my favorite freckled lady on Packard
a discarded magic 8 eight ball
my 5 person group chat with a weird name
my grandmother who's thousands of miles away
an ancient fax machine
a buried ancestor
a pushed up daisy or blooming cherry blossom
the worms fidgeting in soil after the rain subsides
the decade old woodchips on the school playground
a tired old swing with a loud creak
the piece of gum stuck to the bottom of my shoe
a group of geese sharing bread at the park
the bugs hiding underneath a log
an elder at the bus stop
Or a swaddled newborn baby
Maybe an undistinguished higher power
Who wants me to figure it out
Myself.

MICHELLE LARDIE-GUZEK
Groundcover contributor

Healing, I see now, is more than simply finding
It is the process of becoming.
The determination to do, be, and create more,
For yourself.
This is not done through examination and understanding alone.

It is the toil of hands in the dirt of
habitual thoughts and patterns

The endless effort to try and do otherwise

The firm, unshakeable, knowing that how you have been
bent in your efforts to survive,
Is not how you will, or choose to thrive.

It is saying,
regardless of what others say, do, or believe

I am my own
I alone have the power to determine
Who I am,
How I feel,
and
What I do about it.

In loving memory of Melvin Parson (1964- 2026)

PONY BUSH
Groundcover vendor No. 305

Melvin

Pony

Sometime in 2021 a friend from the church I was going to brought me to meet Melvin. My friend knew Melvin was hiring those who once were incarcerated and were now released and looking for work. It was hard to find work so I agreed to go with my friend to meet Melvin about a job.

When I first met Melvin for my job interview I knew he was a good guy; I felt comfortable around him. We connected. We're both from Detroit originally. I think we served time together but can't remember when and where.

During the interview Melvin told me about the farm and the work I would be doing. I never thought I would be working on a farm and planting seeds.

When I started to work on the farm I was learning a lot about plants, seeds and even the sun. I didn't know how many different types of tomatoes there are! I was working with a few other people who also had come out of jail or prison. Some people had a hard time working out in the sun — it would get hot and there wasn't much shade. We had to be careful about dehydration. But most of the time we all were serious about the hard work we were doing. We realized how uncommon it is to be a Black farmer today.

One of the bigger learning experiences from my time on the Farm was the pay schedule. I was used to fast money, but the farm job had a payout every two weeks. I had to be patient and have self-control over my money, especially if I wanted to stay out of jail.

Melvin was giving away food to people in the community through a food pantry around the corner from the Farm. And, I would drive around with Melvin to deliver vegetables to different restaurants and to those working on the houses for Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley.

I admired Melvin, like a positive role model. It's hard to find work, housing and community when you are released from prison. Melvin was making sure people who have a hard time finding work had an opportunity through the Farm. He was doing something different and was making something I wouldn't have thought about.

My time on the farm taught me many things. One thing I won't ever forget is, "One seed can grow a big plant!" Melvin had an impact on me — he created opportunities for people like me looking for a way to work, learn work skills, learn more about farming, and commit to something I didn't see for myself before. I'm going to miss Melvin.

To Be the Poem

CASSIE CATANIA
Groundcover contributor

She's on her knees,
As if praying,
Crying into the soil.

She's on her hands and knees,
Carving into the dark, damp earth,
Spreading roots.

She's on stage
Moving her body through space
In a way that says,
"Look at all this potential."

She's on stage
Reading your poetry,
Tending the ether,
Carving space for your words
To bring more light into the world.

Beloved, you are the poem.

Want to lower the cost of your energy bills?

The Washtenaw County Weatherization Program has EXPANDED. Income guidelines have INCREASED. All work is FREE of charge!

Weatherization can include:
- Home Energy Inspection
- Air Sealing and Insulation
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Income must be at or below 80% area median income (AMI) to qualify:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6
Income Limit 80% AMI	$70,500	$80,600	$90,650	$100,700	$108,800	$116,850

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415 W. Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti
washtenaw.org/weatherization

My interpretation of the song "The Gambler"

THE CONFUSED CLOUD
Groundcover contributor

When I found out a poetry issue was coming out for Groundcover, I knew right away it was a sign to write out my interpretation of the song "The Gambler," which was made famous by the late, great Kenny Rogers. I remember hearing the song as a kid around the time of first grade. My grandparents on my mom's side were country music fans.

The Gambler was written by Don Schlitz, who wasn't much of a gambler in real life, let alone a professional gambler. Bobby Bare and Johnny Cash also sang the song, but it was definitely made famous by Kenny Rogers. I still hear people singing it in public sometimes.

In the song, two strangers are sitting in a train for what seems to be a long ride. There's The Narrator and The Gambler. It starts with The Narrator saying "They were both too tired to sleep." I've been on many Amtrak train rides often lasting between one and two days. I personally can relate to being exhausted yet not able to sleep. I'm not sure how common this is because everyone else in the train cars looks like they're asleep. I try at least fifteen times but almost never get any sleep.

The train is bound for nowhere. My interpretation of this is it doesn't matter where the train is going. This song reminds me of another great piece of poetry which is in the Bible — the Book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes, according to tradition, was written by King Solomon, the son of King David. One of the themes of Ecclesiastes is that many things, such as wisdom, pleasure and toil, are meaningless. I think a lot of the meaninglessness of life is also a theme of "The Gambler."

Anyway, the two people are The Narrator and The Gambler. The Narrator never said anything to The Gambler. The Gambler started talking out of boredom. When Don Schiltz wrote the song in 1976, walkmans and smartphones hadn't been invented yet, walkmans weren't invented until 1979. Some people brought books on the trains, but for the most part train travel was much more boring than these days.

The Gambler starts by telling The Narrator, "Son, I've made a life out of reading people's faces and knowin' what their cards were by the way they held their eyes. So, if you don't mind me saying, I can see you're out of Aces." At this time, I can see the song isn't really about playing cards for money, it's meant to be a metaphor for life. In most card games, Aces are the highest card, so being out of Aces symbolizes being down on your luck. Who knows why The Narrator looked down and defeated. Many things make life hard. Maybe The Narrator was having marital, financial or health problems. Maybe The Narrator "being out of Aces" meant his life's dreams seemed out of reach. Maybe he had no hope for certain goals. Maybe he felt judged and marginalized by the world. Maybe alcohol or addiction had taken over his life.

The Gambler offers a bit more advice to The Narrator. His only price is a taste of The Narrator's whiskey. In the 1970s, personal bottles of alcohol were technically not allowed on trains but the rules were rarely enforced. A practice called brown bagging, keeping liquor in a brown paper bag, was common on trains. It wasn't until 1984 that Amtrak more strictly enforced alcohol rules, limiting alcohol to cafe, dining and private sleeper cars.

The Gambler finished The Narrator's whiskey, bummed a cigarette (which was still allowed) and asked for a light. Then his face changed and he "lost all expression." He says, "If you're gonna play the game, boy, you got to learn to play it right."

In the chorus The Gambler says "You got to know when to hold them and know when to fold them." This is probably one of the most famous song lyrics in history, or at least in the last century. I interpret this line as a metaphor for life. Knowing when to hold them seems to mean don't give up on goals, relationships, belief systems or a solution to one of life's problems. Many motivational speakers have said don't give up. Then there's "Know when to fold them" or when to give up on a goal. This isn't always bad. I used to want to be an accountant and make lots of money. But because of trauma and mental illness I had to give up on that goal. I also used to really enjoy alcohol. Eventually drinking became dangerous to me and I had to quit, "fold them." I used to be a member of a controversial, extremely fundamental Christian church and I had to let go of that identity and many of my beliefs.

Next, The Gambler said, "Know when to walk away, and know when to run." It's weird that the only two choices are to walk away or run away. Maybe it's assumed that if you're winning of course, you keep playing. Gambling-wise, walking away can mean The Gambler has realized he's not going to win anymore, or has lost all he planned on losing before leaving. Maybe he's tired or has other plans. There will be a time to play again. Running implies danger. Maybe he gambled more than he has and the other players are going to want their money. Maybe his creditors are going to get violent.

In life, an example of when it's time for me to walk away is when I'm arguing with someone and neither of us are going to change our mind. If I can't physically walk away, I try to agree to disagree or change the subject. As a last resort I pretend to agree until I can get away and avoid that subject with that person in the future. I don't feel guilty being dishonest. My peace is much more valuable to me than what I see is a forced sense of integrity. Other times, to "walk away" can be cancelling plans when I'm sick or even just really tired. If someone on the street gives me a mean look or even makes an insulting comment, which has happened to me, I turn and go the other way. Some examples of when I've had to "know when to run" include if something upsetting happens and I'm tempted to drink I "run" by getting away from the situation and using coping skills such a calling for support, going out to eat, sitting with a soda and Youtube Music, or going to see a movie. I also try to run in abusive, toxic situations and I keep my phone with me if I can't physically get away and need help. A really important time to "know when to run" is in severe mental health crises where I'm a danger to myself or others. I run by calling the crisis line, or some other option to get into the Psych ER. I've saved both my life and freedom many times by getting help in crises.

The next line is, "You never count your money while you're sittin' at the table. There'll be time enough for countin' when the dealin's done." This can apply in many cases. I used to really want to lose weight. I'd weigh myself every day and get so frustrated when I didn't see immediate results. When I first got on psych meds, I wanted to feel better right away. Now when I look back and realize how much better I feel over the years, it's much more gratifying. Patience and waiting to "count my money" is more effective in many areas of my life. I really don't trust things that give me instant gratification. So that's how I interpret that verse.

The next verse is probably my favorite because it contradicts all the extremism and division in the world today. The Gambler says, "Every gambler knows that the secret to surviving is knowing what to keep. Cause every hand's a winner and every hand's a loser and the best that you can hope for is to die in your sleep." I want to first give my interpretation of "Every hand's a winner and every hand's a loser." Let's take the example of fundamentalist Christianity. Many people love it. It gives their life meaning. Many have quit alcohol, drugs and other addictions by converting to Christianity. Many lonely people have found a great sense of a loving family and community. In this case, "the hand" of fundamentalist Christianity is a "winner." Other people have been abused by fundamentalist Christianity. In the group I was in I felt guilty most of the time. I was belittled by leaders and punished if I spoke up. I also gave a lot of time and money and was sleep-deprived. I was in college and my grades suffered. Other people in fundamentalist Christian groups have been physically and sexually abused from childhood. The Bible has been used to justify corporal punishment. Proverbs 13:24 says "Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but one who loves their children is careful to discipline them." Many women and LGBTQ individuals have suffered because of fundamentalist Christian groups. So in that case "the hand" of fundamentalist Christianity is a "'loser."

This model of every hand being both a "winner" and "loser" can apply to other religions, political parties and beliefs, ways of life, and even diets (ketogenic, vegetarian vs. vegan vs. mediterranean and others). There's also the example of different ways to recover from addiction. There's AA, SMART recovery, just quitting, or just cutting back. People have successfully quit addictions using both the disease model and moral failing model. People have also failed with each model. Things I would also argue are that a "hand," say a friendship or romantic relationship, can be a "winner" one day and a "loser" the next. (The song "Hard to Say I'm Sorry" by Chicago along with several other songs suggest a little time apart for couples to strengthen the relationship.)

So back to the previous verse, The Gambler says that "Every Gambler knows the secret to survivin' is knowing what to throw away and knowin' what to keep." In the example of fundamentalist Christianity, I got rid of a lot of my old beliefs and guilty feelings. Yet I still consider myself a Christian. I've heard people say I'm either a "believer" and "know the truth" or I don't. For people who believe I can't pick and choose which Bible verses I believe and follow, I recommend searching "President Bartlet Kicks the Bible Thumpers' Butts" on Youtube. It's a very enlightening clip from the show "The West Wing." Like I said before, in relationships I can change the subject, agree to disagree, or get out of the conversation. I consider myself a liberal Democrat but I don't need to agree with them on every issue. I also don't need to hate every single thing about right-wing Republicans. I have Republican friends. (But I do hate a lot of things about the MAGA movement.) In recovery groups, personal therapy, while reading self-help

see **GAMBLER** next page ➡

From August to April

VERONICA SANITATE
Groundcover contributor

When I see love, I see a deep purple plum,
sweet swollen reward inviting the prick
of teeth on its skin: velvet without, honey
within. Have your fill. There will be juice!
But life wanes, transmutes into a slow jog

in the rain. The season cools. Plums fulfilled,
then shrivel. Leaves yellow, dry and curl, meet
shadow, think ruin, imagine removal. And
what do we know of the soul of winter but
its frayed black braided ribbon. Gravesend.

Yet in the garden, the translucent snakeskin
offers a hint of persistence. Seeds frost and
sleep. Hope is the silver filament that coils
from spring's fragile soil. And isn't this love?
Pit of our pit, red of marrow, life-force pink.

➡ **GAMBLER** from last page

books and listening to videos and podcasts on mental health and recovery, I take what works for me and leave the rest. This is again where Ecclesiastes comes in. One of my favorite Bible verses is Ecclesiastes 7:16-18. It says, "Don't be over-righteous neither be overwise, why destroy yourself?" "Don't be overworked and do not be a fool — why die before your time?" (Both good questions). "It is good to grasp one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes." I've realized that nothing is absolute and something that works for someone else may not work for me.

So The Gambler seems to be giving advice on acceptance, change, compromise, patience, intuition and balance. But then there are his last words of wisdom, which turn out to be his last words. The Gambler said, "The best that you can hope for is to die in your sleep." This reminds me of the meaninglessness of Ecclesiastes. Unless medicine hugely revolutionizes, every single person on Earth (and the International Space Station) whether successful or a loser, rich or poor, a humanitarian or a sociopath, right wing Republican or left-wing Democrat, Christian or Atheist, in 150 years will be gone and it will be all new people on Earth. In the history of the world or even human history, 150 years is a fraction of history. If I become a famous writer, or if I drink myself to death, or any number of other possibilities, in 150 years it will be a different world.

Then The Gambler crushes out his cigarette and fades off to sleep. The song says he "breaks even" which I take to mean he dies. But it turns out his life isn't meaningless. The Narrator says that in The Gambler's final words he found an "Ace" that he could keep. The Narrator gained wisdom, wisdom that I'm trying to continue to share 50 years later. That's the irony of "The Gambler." The song finds meaning in meaninglessness. I find that's true with much of art, poetry, music, and movies.

Morning Nothings That Mean Everything

LORRAINE LAMEY
Groundcover contributor

Like a farmer with her buckets
for feeding, watering, and rinsing,
I make my morning rounds
and sound a smacked lip chirp
cardinal style
with a pur-dee-bur-dee-bur-dee-bur-dee
— (or two) thrown in for good measure —
to let all the birds know
their bath and watering holes are refreshed,
and their feeders are full,

as full as my heart
when I round the garden of nectar blooms
with the buzzies and flutterbyes already busy
at their feast, while the joyful ones
zip and hover between
their hummingbird feeder
and the forest of blooms.

Neighbors stroll by in the perfect summer sun —
blue sky, warm air, with a kiss
of the north wind
dissipating humidity and heat.
Some have dogs who love
skritches, strokes, and singing praise.

Once again indoors, sunshine and fresh air
stream through the open windows and screens
unveiled after weeks of stultifying dripping heat,
all to the soundtrack of WRCJ's classical tunes
and Dr. Dave's dad jokes
about long dead composers:
You say "Carmina." I say "Burana."
Let's call the whole thing "Orff."

Peace breathes in and out of the morning air,
falls like dew on leaf and blade.

Musings at the Market

PETER MICHAELSON
Groundcover contributor

In Ann Arbor this bright morning, my joy
shoots up ten watts: a parking spot opens up
by the Farmer's Market's flower pots.
It's late July, the hottest time up here
in the north country. I slip into the knots
of people eyeing the organics.

Peaches preen and pepper powders sneeze
at the gentle people gliding to their ease.
They all take baby steps and are pleased with
where they glance. Here time tarries where,
entranced, the Motown Bakery and Cider Mill
ogle fat blueberries in ten-pound boxes.

The Green Things Farm Collective says
the goodies are gourmet. Banter at the
Frog Holler Farm booth claims the world
will be okay. If I had a purist's devotion,
I would eat that Stony Creek cabbage
and apply this Great Goat Lotion.

Here the coffee tastes like slam poetry
set to the bongs of an explosion. Caffeinated,
my pensive mind throngs among the townies.
Nature is so lush, I muse, and we stumble
around bumping into her, smashing into her,
not like this pressed juice we gently crush.

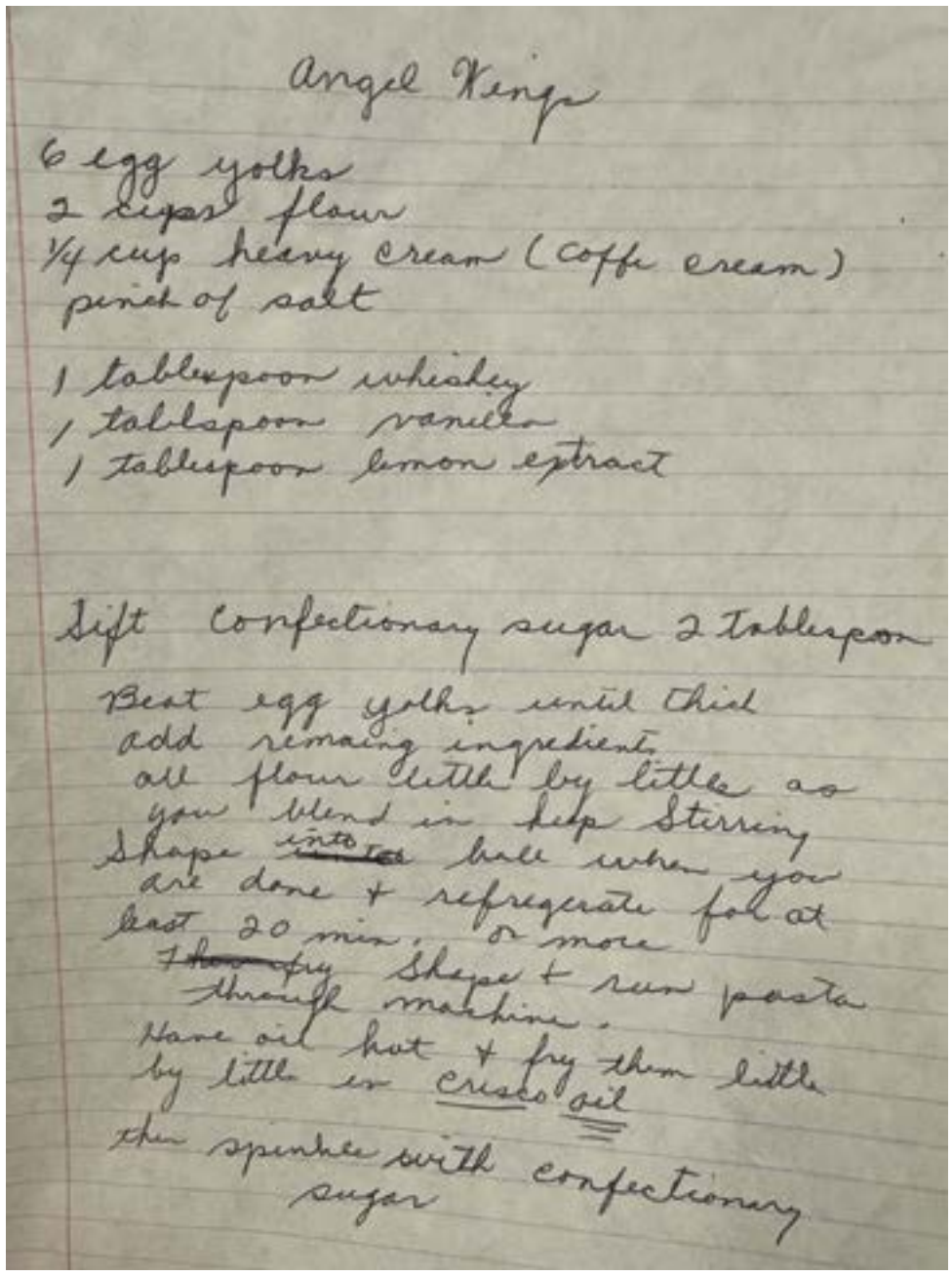
We harm what overwhelms us, I deduce.
I curb this grief, come back to the moment
to romance the treats: baby kale, Mindo chocolates,
fresh pressed juice, Dexter beef, Hippy Tea,
pierogies and purses. Frozen natural meats
coexist with catnip, snake, and shrimp plants.

Flowers charm the eyes and crown the crowd
by Fluffy Bottom Farms. Hey Honey consoles
the dead duck and walleye across the aisle.
The mushroom man sells caviar of fungi.
Ennobled in Flora and Fauna's showplace,
we become the grace that smiles at passers-by.

March

RYAN MCCARTY
Groundcover contributor

My old neighbor's staying with a woman around the block. It's the start of spring. She works days. His feet are killing him. He needs a lift to Family Dollar. He's planning a feast for her, something to cook in the less-cold sun. He's carrying two phones but no chargers. One has a lock screen with a close-up of her breasts. All I can think to say is, with two phones, he could've spread the shot out. That gives him a jolt. There are four other cars in the lot, with four drivers waiting for someone, arms out their windows, soaking heat from the sun-beat sides of their cars. My neighbor decides on tuna with relish. She never eats after work anyway. But he scored triple-As for the universal remote. Now it's a dinner show. He's so worked up, he forgot the painkillers for his feet. It's ok. He's got a fresh set of batteries.


Angel Wings

6 egg yolks
2 cups flour
¼ cup heavy cream (Coffee cream)
pinch of salt

1 tablespoon whiskey
1 tablespoon vanilla
1 tablespoon lemon extract

Sift confectionary sugar 2 Tablespoon

Beat egg yolks until thick
add remaing ingredients
all flour little by little as
you blend in help Stirring
Shape ~~into~~ a ball when you
are done + refrigerate for at
least 20 min. or more
~~Then~~ fry Shape + run pasta
through machine.
Have oil hot + fry them little
by little in Crisco oil
then sprinkle with confectionary
sugar

Angel Wings for Easter

AMANDA GALE
Groundcover vendor No. 573

This is my Beloved Granny's actual, handwritten indications for our Family Angel Wings Recipe, which we called "Stuchette" in our Northern Italian dialect. Stuchette means 'pieces' or 'broken pieces,' and that meaning fits well with the broken body of CHRIST and HIS healings of our brokennesses. These cookies are typically made during Lent; we made them then, and also along with our Resurrection Sunday meal.

Since my Granny is passed from this life, including this recipe in her own hand feels like a special tribute to her; and like, she now has her 'Angel Wings.'

For folding, like many European holiday recipes, 'Angel Wings' appears in several countries, and with variations, though mostly for its shaping. There are simple ribbons and bow ties; our Family shaped these cookies as knot-bows, as follows:

Cookies are always shaped before frying. Roll dough out as thin as possible (nearly transparent, like thick lasagna noodles) on a lightly floured surface. Cut dough (with a round wheel tool for design or a butter knife) into strips about 1/2" wide. Cut a slit in the center of each strip; take one end of strip and tuck it through the center slit, pulling it gently to create a twisted bow or 'wing' appearance. Tug gently to lengthen and further thin pastry for a lighter texture. Fry each one in hot oil until golden, 30-60 seconds per side. Drain on paper towels, and generously dust with powdered sugar while warm. ENJOY!

Key to some obscure words from my Granny's handwriting: remaining ingredients, keep stirring, shape into ball, "+" for "and," through machine, have oil, Crisco oil, sprinkle with. Also please note 'heavy cream' could be just 'heavy cream' and not coffee cream.

St. Francis of Assisi Parish
"If God were your Father, you would love me,
for I came from God and am here;
I did not come on my own, but he sent me."
+ Christ Jesus (John 8:42)
Come Worship With Us!
Mass Schedule
Saturday 5 pm (English) & 7 pm (Spanish)
Sunday 8:30 am, 10:30 am,
12:30 pm, 5 pm
2250 East Stadium Blvd., Ann Arbor
www.StFrancisA2.com 734-821-2100

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